3: Read E-5 (1935-1939)1960
FR5 Ngoni FR5

105 621 senior men who related to me historial events, family genealogies, war-songs and other Ngoni traditional knowledge, including the ideas and methods of bringing up Ngoni children. In the evenings the schoolboys gathered by my hut to [124] practise their English, to discuss their school work and their [191] plans for the future. The tsetse menace had for some time been threatening the cattle and losses were considerable. The boys wanted above all to emigrate and find work so that they could earn money to send home to their fathers to buy more cattle, pay taxes, buy clothes, guns and ammunition, for it was lion country.

Out of the thirty-one households in the village, twenty- [162] five belonged to the men of Ngoni clans. There were nine [592] elderly widows of Ngoni leading families, and of the younger women eighteen were true Ngoni. There was therefore both among the men and the women, and in the senior and younger age-groups, a high proportion of those who were true Ngoni and who practised the Ngoni way of living. It was a village where Ngoni cultural patterns were very much in evidence, and where the school and the church, representing modern developments, were closely integrated with village life.

Emcakateni was just off a main road and as easily acces- [361] sible as Enkodlweni was remote. It was perched on a hill-top in a commanding position, and was much larger, with a hundred and twenty-two households compared with thirty-one. There were several kraals and many cattle, no tsetse menace, but lions in the neighbourhood which more than once attacked the kraal at night. Outsiders, that is of non-Ngoni clans, who had money, had married into the chief's and other leading families, and these households possessed well-built brick houses. I lived in a grass-and-pole hut in- [342] side a fence, near the compound of the big house. There was [871] no school in the village, and the nearest one was run by a [797] mission disliked by the leading Ngoni. The boys spent all their time with the cattle, or hunting or practising crafts.

3: Read E-5 (1935-1939) 1960
FR5 Ngoni FR5

There were musicians and craftsmen there, as at Enkodlweni. All the senior Ngoni men knew Ngoni history, used proverbs in the courts and in conversation, and two or three senior men knew and carried out the ritual of the ancestor cult. The new element in this village was due to economic influences rather than missionary and educational. Most of the men had learned to read and write Nyanja while away at work, but no one knew more than a few words of English, and only one or two of the leading men, and no women, spoke Ngoni.

The men of the leading Ngoni families formed a closely knit group for purposes of village affairs, social life and ritual performances. There was a group of senior Ngoni women who exerted a powerful influence in all matters concerned with household life and the bringing up of children. But out of a total of one hundred and twenty-one households, only thirty-seven belonged to men of Ngoni clans, and there were only thirty-two women of Ngoni clans including both the older and the younger groups of women. The aristocratic group here was small in comparison with Enkodlweni, but the influence of their ways of living was proportionately much stronger. The Ngoni men and women of leading families were very conscious of their cultural distinction and also of their relatively small numbers, and many were the complaints about 'those other people who are spoiling our land'.

Political and social changes

When the British took over the administration of Nyasaland between 1891 and 1901, the Ngoni kingdoms received no special recognition. Their chiefs, called by the administration principal village headmen, and their heads of clans called village headmen, were relegated to the same position *vis-à-vis* the administration as the local peoples. Part of the Central Ngoni kingdom was cut off from the rest by the treaty demarcating the Nyasaland boundary from Portuguese East Africa.

3: Read E-5 (1935-1939) 1960
FR5 Ngoni FR5

older, on reaching them he had to bend one knee, or sit down, and say in a low but clear voice: 'They are calling you.' If a child was sent to call another child to his father because he had a scolding to administer, the bad child had to listen with head bent down, not saying a word or making a sound until the father had finished all he had to say, whether the accusation was just or not. If the child forgot himself and answered back or made excuses, the onlookers would beat the child for being rude to his father. If when taking a message a child had to pass a line or a group of people, he had always to go in front of them, never behind, bending forward from the waist and murmuring as he went by, 'I am before your eyes.' If a child had to give an adult a food basket or any other object, he had to offer it with both hands and bend slightly over it; and when he received it back he always did so with both hands outstretched and bent head.

Acting as messengers constantly, and no child was immune from being called if he or she was in the village, impressed on children from their early years the chief behavioural skills of language and deportment. Taking a message was always a formal occasion, and standards of behaviour in language, posture and gesture were rigidly enforced. We shall see in later chapters how very small children were first taught to thank people for gifts or in response to a greeting, and later to greet people politely themselves. The correct terms in which to address or to refer to relatives formed another stage in learning language skills, and later on came reminders about the use of pronouns and the use of the second person singular and plural of verbs, the first to equals only, the second to all adults, with the third person plural for chiefs and 'great ones'. About the age of five or six a child was told: 'When your mother speaks to a stranger she says "Please (you) sit here". You should speak like this to all people you must honour. Only rude people speak that other way—people who do not know how to thank and how to honour, not like the Ngoni who know these things.'

3: Read E-5 (1935-1939)1960
FR5 Ngoni FR5

might be a chore but when it was done in the open it was also an advertisement of high standards.

The art of speech

The Ngoni believed that as boys and girls neared adult life they should be well drilled in the art of speaking, because it was regarded as a basic Ngoni characteristic. We have seen how adults watched children tossing riddles at each other to test, among other things, their quickness of speech. Girls had been watched telling stories to see how they held their audience and showed a sense of dramatic values in recitation.

In all the standardized forms of speech such as greetings, messages, announcements, responses, young adults were expected to speak clearly and correctly, without mumbling but not too loudly. When relating an event, such as a visit, a bull-fight, or when giving evidence in the courts, they had to give an orderly account without repetition. Otherwise they were told: 'You are speaking badly. Tell it again, in order, from the beginning.' An ordered sequence of the narrative was always demanded, and, as we shall see in the next chapter, they used proverbs frequently to impress on people speaking the need to get to the point, while leaving out nothing of importance.

The art of words used with music in songs was regarded as a special gift and those who possessed it were encouraged to develop it. Inspiration for words and music was as we have seen something which came 'from the chest' and was regarded almost as if it was a special kind of breathing. Some used this gift to sing with a solo instrument such as a stringed lyre. Others used it to compose new songs for *ngoma* dances. Others again wrote Christian hymns and composed music for them, or set them to traditional Ngoni tunes.

The art of dancing

'Ngoni people think that their dances show their personality, their manhood, that which was born in them.' Phrases like

3: Read E-5 (1935-1939)1960
FR5 Ngoni FR5

577 accident. These visits and expressions of sympathy could not be omitted without grave social disapproval. If a young man or woman was absent from the village at the time of death or loss, their first duty on returning was to go and express sympathy with the sufferer. To assist in these condolences so that the speaker and the hearer would readily understand each [538] other, proverbs were used such as: 'If the pot is broken it is broken indeed,' and, 'When water is poured out it cannot be gathered up.' The Ngoni disliked the noisy and unrestrained [765] forms of mourning which they saw among the people round them. To them the quiet visit and the note of resignation in the proverbs used fully conveyed the sympathy they wished to express.

577 All through the later stages of training children and young adults the importance of speaking well was emphasized. ● 191 This at first referred to correct language and being audible 195 but not noisy. Later, as we saw in Chapter VII, the art of 538 speech was held up as a Ngoni characteristic, and many proverbs brought this out in ordinary conversation as well as on more formal occasions such as giving evidence in the courts. When a group of people, generally women, kept up a continuous meaningless chatter, onlookers, generally men, shrugged their shoulders and said, 'They are preparing meat without salt.' When a person talked on and on about a matter which was being discussed without getting to the point, impatient listeners, or the councillor in the law courts said: 'Your wisdom is like mushrooms which come after the cooking is finished,' or, more scathingly, 'You are the feet of a centipede' which wander aimlessly with many steps but no direction. Proverbs were not always a form of rebuke; they could also be a commendation. When a person brought out clearly the point of an argument the listeners said, 'You have rung a little bell'; and when after a prolonged discussion or the hearing of a case in the courts the audience accepted a decision as conclusive and just, they said, 'The upper and the lower teeth meet together.'

6:Rattray E,G-5 (ca. 1900) 1907 FR5 Ngoni FR5

PREFACE BY THE AUTHOR

In the study of this language, the student is fortunate in having two such scholarly works of reference as *A Practical Manual of the Nyanja Language*, by the Rev. A. Hetherwick, M.A., D.D., F.R.G.S., and *A Cyclopædic Dictionary of the Mang'anja Language*, by the Rev. D. C. Scott, M.A., D.D., F.R.S.G.S.; on the other hand, there is a striking want of any good prose work in that language. Of translations of the Bible, and other religious books, there are many, but all such works, in the translation, follow the English text almost literally, and contain so many words from foreign sources as to be of little use to the student who, having mastered the grammar and syntax of the language, seeks to enlarge his vocabulary and knowledge of idiomatic expression by reading some prose work. (The ideal translation of the Bible, or other religious work, would be one in which the English sentence is taken, the meaning got at, and this remodelled and transformed according to the native way of thought and expression.) It is to supply such a want that this little work is intended. The aim throughout has been, in the Chinyanja part, to write each sentence as a raw native would speak it. It is a commonly heard saying, that only boys trained at a Mission talk the language "grammatically." This is correct, if by "grammar" we mean a principle of set rules for the speaking of a language. For to the uncivilized native any such rules as those governing our own, and other languages of civilized countries,

6:Rattray E, G-5 (ca. 1900) 1907 FR5 Ngoni FR5

are unknown, and he talks, "having regard rather to the poetical feeling than to the grammatical position and syntax of a word." But enclitics, tense particles, concords, the various forms of the verb (applied, causative, intensive, reversive, etc.), and all those auxiliary particles such as *ba*, *ka*, *ngo*, *dzi*, and enclitic particles such as *-nso*, *-be*, *-tu*, etc., by which all the finer shades of meaning are expressed, he uses absolutely correctly, and it is with a view of understanding, and making oneself understood, to the raw, uneducated element among these natives, that one should go to the trouble of learning this language.

The customs, stories, etc., recorded herein are those of the natives inhabiting Central Angoniland. They are descendants, for the most part through intermarriage with the Achewa, of the Zulus who came from south of the Zambezi, scattering as they advanced, under different leaderships; those under *Gwaza* (the father of *Sakambewa*), and his *nduna Chiwere*, settling at Dowa; *Mpezeni*, a son of *Gwaza*, settling near Fort Jameson. *Mputa*, the father of *Chikusi*, after reaching as far as Lake Chirwa, and raiding the Anguru under *Sinjaubwereka*, came to Domwe, near Dedza, under promise of cattle from *Sosola*, a *Chipeta*, or *Nchewa* chief. (*Chipeta* and *Nchewa* are synonymous, the former word being a sobriquet bestowed on the *Achewa* who came on to the Angoniland plateau, by the *Achewa* who settled on the Lake shore, the latter referring to the former as the *a chipeta*, i. e. they of the *chipeta* (long grass)). Intermingled with these customs, borrowed for the most part by the conquerors from the conquered, are to be found traces here and there, and here and there a word, which strike the key-note of their past history, now all but forgotten even by themselves. But what is of their

9: Read E-5 (1935) 1936 FR5 Ngoni FR5

serve their own culture, so that they were not submerged in the very different cultures round them? The Ngoni themselves give the answer to this first question, saying, 'We fought with spears and shields; those others had only bows and arrows and sometimes guns.'[1] The making of these shields, which formerly gave courage and protection to the warriors, is to this day almost a ritual. To watch a chief working at one on the threshold of his hut, or a village headman and his friends cutting and shaping one in the kraal, is to realize the value put on them by the Ngoni. They refuse to make them for sale as curiosities, and several Europeans have told me that they have tried in vain to get one.

Having conquered by the shield and spear, the Ngoni maintained their prestige by their highly developed political organization. All around them were small chieftains owning a few villages with no integration in any large political unit.[2] The Ngoni state was focussed in the *inkosi*, the Paramount Chief, who was at once the 'owner'[3] of the land, the 'head'[3] of the state, and the 'father'[3] of his people. The Ngoni, as we have seen, are always ready to indicate those institutions and related traditions which mark them off from the surrounding tribes, and which give their state a cultural reality of its own. They point first to their language and their traditions of Dingiswayo, Zwidi, and Chaka as proving their southern origin. Other neighbouring peoples have vague traditions of wandering from north to south, or west to east, but the Ngoni know exactly where they came from and by what route. Their language is almost identical with old Zulu. I was told by many Europeans that it hardly existed any longer, and I was therefore surprised to find to what an extent it is still spoken and used. Most of the true Ngoni to-day are bilingual[4]; with the exception of a few very old Ngoni people, everyone to-day speaks one of the local vernaculars, Nsenga, Tumbuka, or Chewa.[5] Ngoni is the language of the aristocrats, and a large proportion of the true

[1] The kind of antique guns traded to the Chewa by the Portuguese and Arabs were no match for the Ngoni skill with the long throwing-spear or the short stabbing-assegai, and the bullets were such that the stout cow-hide shields of the Ngoni could withstand them. Hence the consternation of the Ngoni when the machine-gun bullets of the British troops pierced their shields in the Ngoni 'war'.

[2] With the possible exception of Chikuramayembe, Chief of the Henga.

[3] Translations of vernacular terms.

[4] Or trilingual if they know English too.

[5] The same as Nyanja.

9: Read E-5 (1935) 1936 FR5 Ngoni FR5
Maravi FR4

Ngoni understand and speak it. It is in fact one of the distinguishing marks between the true Ngoni and the rest. It is convenient for a chief to be able to exchange a few remarks with a relative or an important visitor in a language which the onlookers cannot follow, and I have also heard a chief do the same with one of his *indunas* during a case in court. When I played Zulu records on my gramophone the aristocrats and old warriors drew near to listen, while the nobodies who could not understand fell back naturally. It is interesting to see how this language test brings out the social distinctions based on family and rank, and produces generally an inferiority reaction among the non-Ngoni.

As other distinguishing institutions the Ngoni point out their dances[1] and songs; their former military organization with its related system of age grades; their political organization under the Paramount Chief with his hierarchy of *amakosana*, *abalumuzana*, *izinduna*, *amanxusa*, &c.; the system of courts, again a hierarchy, with the laws administered in them; their village organization which still preserves the division into *izigawa* or hamlets, characteristic of the very big Ngoni villages of old days; the Ngoni code of ethics, differing radically from the code of the neighbouring tribes, with its insistence on truth, chastity, and personal discipline; and their patrilineal descent in clans and inheritance of property. This last, superimposed upon the local matrilineal and matrilocal tribes, has created a variety of forms of marriage and inheritance which is almost the despair of the field worker. The Ngoni say proudly, ' We taught them to honour their sons ' when pointing out how nephew succession has to a large extent given way before filial succession. The values inherent in certain Ngoni institutions have spread beyond their own areas, for one Chewa Paramount Chief told me he had for long admired the Ngoni system of filial succession and inheritance, and was now trying, in the teeth of much opposition, to introduce it into his country.

After I had been a little while among the Ngoni, and their chiefs and leading men had begun to realize my aim in field work, I was surprised by the help they gave me and the amount of co-operation they showed in my enquiries. Then one day an old *induna* revealed

[1] One Ngoni Paramount has prohibited any but Ngoni dances to be danced in his country.

9: Read E-5 (1935) 1936 FR5 Ngoni FR5
Maravi FR4

this they put the blame on the women. They point out that while they were on the march the local women they picked up, with their different language and customs, had not a great deal of influence on the community. Once they were settled, however, and married local women, those women went visiting to their own homes and took their children with them, and gradually a pronounced alien element and another language penetrated into Ngoni society. This is illustrated very well in the girls' initiation ceremonies, which differ very much in Ngoni and Chewa society. Ngoni men and women tell you with disgust how the *chinamwali*, the Chewa ceremony, began to be practised in Ngoni villages in place of the *umsindo* or *umgonxo* of the Ngoni. It was the only occasion on which I have heard them commend the action of the missionaries in putting down a custom, for they really despised the ceremonial and associations of the *chinamwali*, and rather than have it among them, they preferred outside help in putting it down.

The Ngoni dislike very much being asked point blank what cultural adjustments they made due to Chewa and other local customs. They admit reluctantly one or two minor adaptations, and proceed immediately to tell the major changes which they forced on the Chewa and others living under their rule. The chief adjustment by the Ngoni has undoubtedly been the adoption of the local language, as being the language of the women. Ngoni women of good family still speak Ngoni, but I have not found any instances of local women married to Ngoni men who have learned it. One of the perennial topics among the elders in an Ngoni village is the 'bad' influence of the women on the children. When pressed to explain the nature of this 'bad' influence, they say, 'The children are learning only the customs of the women. They cannot know about the Ngoni'. They lament the vanishing of the age-grades as the natural channels for instruction of young men in Ngoni customs, though they say with their characteristic realism, 'What is the good of having age grades and regiments when there is no war?'.

If we were to attempt to reconstruct old Ngoni society as it was in the days before white contact, it is to this period, *chamtendere*, we should turn. There we can find the structure of Ngoni society, the distinctive Ngoni institutions, and Ngoni supremacy over the surrounding tribes as a reality. When the first white people arrived, as